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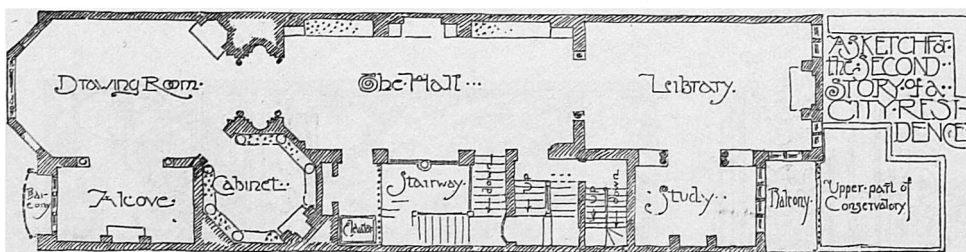
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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



## INTERIOR DECORATION OF CITY HOUSES.

BY RALPH A. CRAM.

### A CABINET.

SINCE we have undertaken a study of the decoration of a city house, we must shirk nothing, but touch upon each room that appears upon our adopted plan. Not because each room is given as an example of what should be the invariable decoration of the given room, for as we have already insisted, there is no law which governs the ornamentation of any particular apartment, the diverse nature of governing circumstances in each instance makes the laws, and what may be right in one house may be flatly wrong in another. Only the laws of moderation, individuality and consistency—the triple rows of the architect—maintain in each case and forever.

Therefore we give this month a sketch for the decoration of a cabinet or ante-room, or withdrawing room, if you like the good old English word, for although at first it might seem relatively unimportant, it actually is not so in the least. As we grow more civilized we are gradually coming to see that the vast crush receptions, once so popular, really belong only to the people who have no other means than their suppers and flowers for drawing guests, while the quiet afternoon teas and small “evenings” and exclusive *réunions*, are far more refined and well bred and enjoyable. And so great halls and drawing-rooms are by no means the only things desirable in a city house; but besides these, small alcoves and cabinets and cosy sitting rooms, where a few congenial souls can mutually gravitate for quiet chat and amusement, instead of being forced to sit on or under the stairs.

Besides this manifest advantage is another. Only unlimited wealth will permit the extent and spaciousness of a country house in a crowded city, consequently the utmost care must be taken in planning a house not to exaggerate the effect of confinement; indeed the architect must make every exertion to create an impression of space while none exists. How doors and archways opening even into small rooms vastly increase this effect of spaciousness and take away much from the baldness of a twenty-five or thirty foot lot. Besides a greater richness of light and shade is so obtained, and effects of color are possible that were out of the question before. Again, most valuable opportunities are offered for variations in decoration. We remember a drawing-room in yellow and white, from which opened an alcove in cool and low-toned blue green; the effect was superb of course. No; it is a vital error to suppose that an effect of size is obtained by a few large rooms—the reverse is the case. One of the most charming houses in the world was that of Alma Tadema, from which he was lately forced to move. Here there was hardly a large room in the house, instead a lot of small and cosy apartments.

Of course there is no particular law for the decoration of a room like this, it is essentially an adjunct of the principle suite, looked at in one way, or on the other hand it may be taken as the very centre of the composition, made into a little treasure house as it were where might be kept the most precious bit of marble, the most treasured pictures, the fairest fragments of bric-à-brac. Such an effect might be charming in many ways, all the decoration being made to lead up to this centre. Then the room would become the centre of a reception, and would to a certain extent be the most important room in the suite. On the other hand, treated as a withdrawing-room, an adjunct, it should be quiet in decoration and darker than the rest, becoming thus merely a kind of conversation room. Then its decoration might be cool and quiet and shadowy, as it would become a resting place, a retreat from the movement and gaiety without.

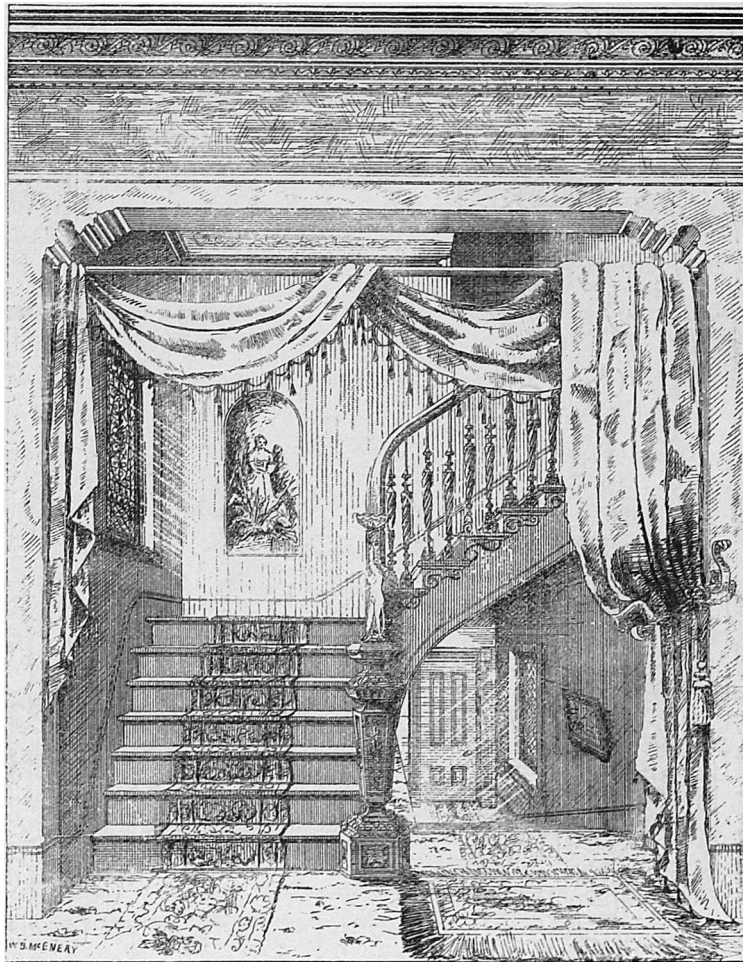
Unfortunately the accompanying drawing is by no means satisfactory or expressive. Made during the hurry of travel it is lacking in many of those qualities which a cabinet should possess, whether it is the centre of the plan or only an accessory. As will be seen from the above plan, the room itself is octagonal, covered by a hemispherical, domed ceiling; a low seat runs about six sides of the room, and at the angles are pedestals for the support of jars of flowers, vases or statues. The decoration of the drawing-room is yellow and white, as will be remembered, the alcove shown on the plan is cool low-toned blue, and the cabinet is strong but not violent red and dead gold. The

wood work, with the high mantel, is stained a russet green, the floor is covered with a dull toned carpet of green and russet and red, the upholstery is dull red plush, and the walls are covered with Venetian red paper, stamped in arabesques of coppery gold. The dome is of shoals of coppery gold, with Byzantine whirls and stars in clear gold. The large central lamp is gilded, the smaller lamp of copper. Thus the effect is rich, red and warm, perhaps a little gorgeous, but a strong and valuable contrast in what is otherwise a rather quiet composition. It will be seen from the small plan printed at the head of this article that the scheme of the main floor of the house is very simple, a first suite of three large rooms, giving an unbroken but varying vista, almost a hundred feet long. Attached to this suite are several smaller rooms and the main stairway. From the study and library a balcony is thrown out into the high conservatory. It might be a good idea to continue the conservatory the whole width of the house, the dining-room windows opening into it. So would be shut out the horror of back yards, besides would be added that which is most charming in a city house, a spacious conservatory.

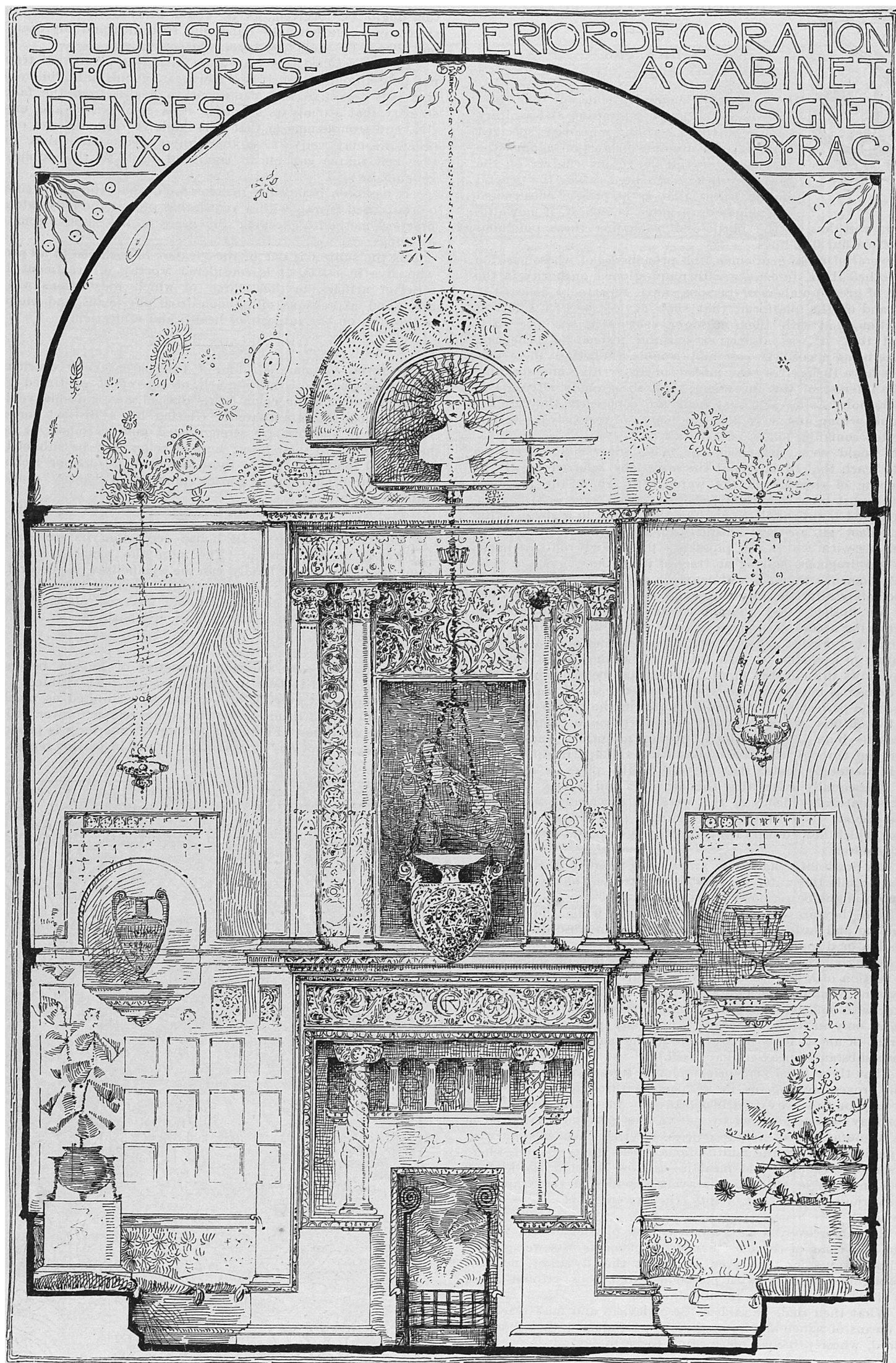
Next month we shall pass to the conservatory and that most important of rooms, the library.

**BORDERING OF CEILINGS**—In old but still perfect decorative plaster work in a room of a fine mansion of “other days,” fir leaves in open work and curved form spring out from the wall and reach over a portion of the ceiling border, the leaves being underlined by a simple gold molded band on wall. Beyond the points of the leaves on the ceiling square and semi-circular molded bands alternate. By this arrangement, without really diminishing the apparent height of the wall, and securing the concealment of the angles of jointure, the ceiling is given the appearance of being deeply paneled, the more so as the pierced centre of involved foliage terminates with a flower boss on a level with the point from which the leaves spring upward from the wall.

**ORDINARY** painted cane seat rocking chairs, which no one admires now, may be much improved and made to look like new if the cane is in good condition by simply removing all paint. It can be done with good strong soap or with some of the receipts which have appeared in *THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER*. After removing the paint or stain if the chair is hard wood it will look nicely, but if it is pine a thin coat of clear varnish will improve it.



HALL DRAPERY, DESIGNED BY W. B. M'ENERY.



A CABINET DESIGN, BY RALPH A. CRAM. (See opposite page).